

critical digest

VOL. III No. 8

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The Weekly That Keeps You Informed of the Current Broadway Critical Scene

New York Openings This Week

The Curious Savage-Martin Beck, 10/24/50. Lillian Gish stars in new John Patrick play presented by Theatre Guild with Russell Lewis and Howard Young. Marta Linden, Brandon Peters, Gladys Henson, Isobel Elsom are featured. Directed by Peter Glenville...Mrs. Warren's Profession-Bleeker Street Playhouse, 10/25/50. First offering of Theatre Venture presents Estelle Windwood and John Loder in Shaw's play...The Day After Tomorrow-Booth, 10/26/50. Frederick Lonsdale comedy with Beatrice Pearson, Melville Cooper, Ralph Mitchell and Bramwell Fletcher. The Shuberts are the producers.

Daily Reviewers Rate the New Plays

Arms and the Man-arena, 10/19/50. Wide range of opinion greeted this centrally staged version of Shaw's comedy. Four critics praised it as the best theatre in the round production of the year, while majority thought it was the worst. Critics of Mirror, Compass, Women's Wear and Newark News found much wit and satire in the 1890 play. Garland, Journal American, might have liked it, if music had been added. Major complaint was that the play didn't become interesting until the final scenes. Direction by Richard Barr and acting by Sam Wanamaker, Francis Lederer, Josephine Brown and Will Kuluva was called either "type casting" or "true Shavian". Several thought cast suffered from opening night jitters.

Burning Bright-Broadhurst, 10/18/50. John Steinbeck's drama novelette, his third try at the new form, divided daily critics. Six "con" and five "pro" were recorded. Critics of Mirror, Compass, Post, Women's Wear and Newark News praised author, director and cast for presenting symbolic and universal play. Two thought it had limited audience, but all praised first rate acting of Kent Smith, Barbara Bel Geddes, Howard Da Silva and Martin Brooks. Direction by Guthrie McClintic was deemed perfect. But dissenters didn't think the play was either symbolic or realistic. While some thought play ranked with early O'Neill works in poetry and scope, Chapman, News, thought it was "sheer balderdash". Compass critic thought it had some of the qualities of greatness about it.

Weekly Critics View the Shows -- additional digests on back page

Call Me Madam-Imperial, 10/12/50. Weekly critics joined Merman bandwagon with exception of Marshall, Nation. She found the entire proceedings free of genuine wit, dull and repetitious. But the rest of the weekly reviewers granted that Merman saved day for some fair Irving Berlin tunes and a strictly "so-so" Crouse and Lindsay book. Gibbs, New Yorker, pondered the exact genius of the star, but arrived at no conclusions.

Legend of Sarah-Fulton, 10/9/50. Authors James Gow and Arnaud D'Usseau won a single favorable review and another batch of free advice from the weekly estimators. The critics urged the authors to stick to the serious and not delve into the comic. Francis, Billboard, thought the exceptional, fine cast headed by Ethel Griffies, Marsha Hunt and Tom Helmore made the evening worthwhile. Others thought the evening was just plain dull and very unfunny.

' A Key to NYC Criticism At A Glance '

Shows are rated as to how the critics liked them, not if they think they will be hits. "So-So" means the critic did not state directly if he recommended the show for an entertaining or stimulating evening.

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| 1. NY Times | 11. Newark News | 21. Catholic World |
| 2. NY Herald Tribune | 12. Women's Wear Daily | 22. Commonweal |
| 3. NY News | 13. Daily Worker | 23. Cue |
| 4. NY Mirror | 14. Wall Street Journal | 24. Chr.Sci.Monitor |
| 5. NY Compass (PM, Star) | 15. Journal of Commerce | 25. Sat.Review Lit. |
| 6. NY Post | 16. George Jean Nathan | 26. Newsweek |
| 7. NY Sun (Morehouse) | 17. Morning Telegraph | 27. Time |
| 8. NY Journal American | 18. Variety | 28. Nation |
| 9. NY World-Telegram & Sun | 19. Billboard | 29. New Republic |
| 10. Brooklyn Eagle | 20. Theatre Arts | 30. New Yorker |

Affairs of State-Royale, 9/25/50. Pro: 10 votes Con: 1-6-7-10-11-12-14-16-22-24-26-27-29.

Black Chiffon-48th St.Theatre, 9/27/50. Pro: 1-4-5-6-8-9-10-11-12-15-16-17-18-19-23-24-26-28-30. Con: 2-3-14-22-27-29.

Burning Bright-Broadhurst-10/18/50. Pro: 4-5-11-12. Con: 1-2-3-6-8-9-10.

Call Me Madam-Imperial, 10/12/50. Pro: 1-2-4-5-6-7-8-9-10-11-12-18-23-26-27-30
Con: 28. So-So: 3.

The Cocktail Party-Miller, 1/2/50. Pro: 21.votes. Con: 1-9-13-14-22-25-29.
So-So: 16-30;

The Consul-Barrymore, 3/15/50. Pro: 27 votes. Con: 22. So-So: 6-29.

Daphne Laureola-Music Box, 9/18/50. Pro: 15 votes. Con: 1-4-6-7-9-13-16-22-27-30. So-So: 2.

Death of a Salesman-Morosco, 2/10/49. Pro: 28 votes. Con: 29. So-So: 27.

Gentlemen Prefer Blondes-Ziegfeld, 12/8/49. Pro: 21 votes. Con: 6-21-28.

The Gioconda Smile-Lyceum, 10/7/50. Con: 15 votes. Pro: 3-9-10-11-12-14-15-28.

The Happy Time-Plymouth, 1/24/50. Pro: 21 votes. Con: 5-6-7-20-26-27-28-30.

Legend of Serah-Fulton, 10/11/50. Pro: 10-11-19. Con: 1-2-3-4-5-5-6-7-10-12-18-23-26-27-28-30.

Kiss Me Kate-Shubert, 12.31.48, Pro: 28 votes. Con: 29. None: 28.

The Member of the Wedding-Empire, 1/5/50. Pro: 26 votes. Con: 16. So-So: 2-27-30

Mister Roberts-Alvin, 2/13/48. Pro: 24 votes. Con: 21-24. So-So: 13-16-17.

Pardon Our French-Broadway, 10/5/50. Pro: 10-11-12-15-18. Con: 2-3-4-6-7-14-16-19-23-26-27-30. So-So: 1-5-8-9-

Peep Show-Winter Garden, 6/28/50. Pro: 4-5-6-7-8-10-11-15-17-19-23. Con: 1-2-12-16-20-26-27-28-29-30. So-So: 3-14-18.

Peter Pan-St. James-4/24/50. Pro: 21 votes. Con: 8-13-16-30. So-So: 6-7-14-19.

Season in the Sun-Cort, 9/28/50. Pro: 19 votes. Con: 10-12-24-28. So-So: 11.

South Pacific-Majestic, 4/8/49. Pro: 19 votes. Con: 27. So-So: 23.

Tickets Please-Coronet, 4/27/50. Pro: 21 votes. Con: 11-16-27-30. So-So: 26.

' Green Room Department '

TRIBE GETS BACKING...With so many poor plays and musicals able to find backers, why can't a worth while play like Sean O'Casey's Cock-a-Doodle-Andy find angels, asks Pollock, Compass. Current season finds fewer plays, but more money ready to be spent on productions with big reputations. Critic feels there is a certain snobbism in betting on a sure thing like Call Me Madam. But he suggests angels would get a bigger thrill backing an O'Casey play, be it hit or flop, than to succeed with a writer of tripe. The O'Casey play, which has not been able to find backers, is amusing, tender and exciting.

WHAT'S MY NAME...Theatrical set is hissing a Broadway producer whispers "The Social Set" post. He fired his secretary via letter two days after she underwent surgery.

REWRITE PRODUCERS...Some bad plays can be blamed on producers who are rewrite mad, insists Burr, Playbill. They will have the author rewrite his script time after time. The best possible rewrite is that which will bring maximum theatrical effect with least possible amount of rewriting.

TV'S SILVER LINING...Take a look at high grosses of theatres and night clubs in New York and you will see that live entertainment will never die, writes Coleman, Mirror. TV also pays room and board for entertainers waiting to sign the proper contract.

NEW PRODUCERS NEEDED...Young dramatist, who wrote letter to N.Y. Times Drama Page, sees the need for a new set of ambitious, earnest producers if theatre is to grow. The circle of producers is afraid to give a new playwright a chance. The new producers should devote part of their time to discovery of new talent.

ADVANCE TIP...Order your tickets now for Out of This World urges Coleman, Mirror. Musical opens November 30th at the Century.

AMERICA SHOW STARVED...There is no need to cultivate the taste of the nation for the theatre, states press agent Ned Armstrong in Show Business. All that is needed is more and larger theatres throughout the country. Add this to a public service slant, plus plenty of dollar seats and the situation will solve itself. There are hundreds of huge auditoriums seating up to 4,000 that could be used for touring productions. The manager who sees the possibilities in such a plan will make a fortune.

ADD PUN'S FUN..."Beachside Tobacco Road" is an apt title for Season in the Sun suggests Phillips, WT&S.

DEBUNKING ACCENTS...British actors aren't necessarily better than American actors, but their accents fool many people into believing so. Theory of Chapman, News, is that the Briton's curious way of distorting our language, misleads and bewilders some people into thinking they are listening to a great artist.

STAR FORMULA...If your daughter has musical comedy aspirations, have her study Ethel Merman writes Durling, Journal American. Be sure she is taught to enunciate clearly, and don't worry too much about her ability to hit the high ones.

' Random Items '

N.Y. mayoralty candidates to state their plans for theatre if elected at next meeting of Drama Desk...Gerald Goode named to head League of N.Y. Theatre and Press Agents plan to promote theatre on national basis.

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' Interview Round Up '
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ALEC GUINNESS...British actor believes Shakespeare provides the perfect training for the theatre, he said from London on NBC Voices and Events. But the tradition of presenting the Bard's plays is so staid that fresh approaches are almost impossible. He wishes that an unknown play of Shakespeare's could be discovered so it could be presented with originality. The actor likes to think that the plays teach us that humility and generosity are prime virtues.

BENN W. LEVY...Director of Legend of Sarah and author of 12 plays chatted in Philadelphia with Morehouse, WT&S, before the Broadway opening. He ranked GBS as the best English playwright in 300 years, while he admitted English actors are better than English actresses. His wife, Constance Cummings, soon goes into rehearsal in his Return to Tyassi.

IRVING BERLIN...Call Me Madam author denied his "They Like Ike" was designed as a presidential campaign song on NBC Hi Jinx. Actually he doesn't think it is a very good song. He recalled pouring his heart into writing "In the Fall We Will All Be Voting for Al" for the Al Smith campaign. But it was a flop. It's easier to write for Merman than for presidential candidates.

JOHN WILDBERG...Black Chiffon producer advocated a committee to study British production costs to Theatre News Weekly. His show cost \$56,000 to produce in New York, but only \$4,800 to produce in London. But even so London producers gripe at the high cost of production. The producer made it clear that the legitimate theatre in Britain receives no government subsidy.

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' Weekly Reviewers Rate the Plays '
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The Gioconda Smile-Lyceum, 10/7/50. Marshall, Nation, was sole weekly critic to find enjoyment in Aldous Huxley's adaptation of his own short story. She felt that Huxley could do no wrong. But her colleagues couldn't agree. They felt Huxley should stick to form of novel and short story and not enter an unfamiliar medium. Time critic thought "smile" was maniacal laugh.

Pardon Our French-Broadway, 10/5/50. Add two more "con" reports for newest Olsen and Johnson opus from George Jean Nathan and Francis, Billboard. Later he admitted to being regular O & J fan, but present show doesn't fill the bill. He thought reason was utter lack of material, plus overlong production numbers.

Season in the Sun-Cort, 9/28/50. Wolcott Gibbs' first play continues to draw raves of his colleagues. New Yorker critic was tabbed "critic's critic" by Brown, SRL, Kerr, Commonweal, and Clurman, New Republic. The first two admitted they read Gibbs' witty reviews, essays and profiles with envy. They also wished the dialogue of the play was up to his usual high level. But the characterizations and fine acting made up for this flaw. Clurman thought Eddie Mayehoff's characterization as a bore worth the price of admission. Direction by Burgess Meredith shared honors with Nancy Kelley and Richard Whorf.

Black Chiffon-48th Street Theatre, 9/27/50. George Jean Nathan considers Leslie Storm melodrama starring Flora Robson an honest and pleasingly uncompromising job. He did suggest that the remainder of the English cast mouthed its words too much. Kerr, Commonweal, and Clurman, New Republic, voted against the play as a weak vehicle for the English star.

